

*Approved Meeting Minutes
South Florida Ecosystem Restoration Working Group
September 21, 2000
West Palm Beach, FL*

Welcome and Introductions

Billy Causey opened meeting at 2:40 PM. The agenda (Enclosure 1) was ratified and the draft minutes (Enclosure 2), scheduled for approval on the following day, were presented. He announced that the Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission recognized Mary Ann Poole as employee of the year. Rock Salt announced the Senate is taking up the WRDA bill today. He also noted the GAO Water Quality hearing was held yesterday and provided the GAO Testimony (Enclosure 3) as well as the statements from Mike Davis (Enclosure 4) and David Struhs (Enclosure 5). The GAO report will be provided at the next meeting.

Working Group Me	Sept. 21	Sept. 22	Alternates
Aller, Chuck - FL Dept of Agriculture and Consumer Services	-	-	Bill Jolly
Barnett, Ernie - FL Dept of Environmental Protection	-	-	
Best, Ronnie - USGS	√	√	
Bradford, Mark - Bureau of Indian Affairs	-	-	
Brad Brown - NOAA, National Marine Fisheries Service	-	-	Carole Goodyear
Billy Causey - NOAA, FL Keys Nat'l Marine Sanctuary	√	-	
Wayne Daltry - Southwest FL Regional Planning Council	√	√	
Carol DeGraffenreidt - U.S. Attorney's Office	-	-	
Frank Duke - Palm Beach County Planning	-	-	Isaac Hoyos
Gene Duncan - Miccosukee Tribe of Indians of FL	√	√	
Gary Evink - FL Dept of Transportation	√	√	
Frank Finch - South Florida Water Management District	√	-	
Maureen Finnerty - National Park Service	√		Germaine Ploos
Steve Forsythe - U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service	√	√	
Michael Goldstein - Gunster, Yoakely, Valdes-Fauli & Stewart	-	-	Sue Alspach
George Hadley - U.S. Dept of Transportation	-	-	
Richard Harvey - Environmental Protection Agency	√	√	
Aaron Higer - U.S.G.S. - Water Resources Division	√	√	
Ronald Jones - Southeast Environmental Research Center	√	√	
Kristina Katsaros - NOAA - AOML	-	-	Judy Gray
Toy Keller - Department of Community Affairs	√	√	
Neal McAliley - U.S. Dept. of Justice	√	√	
COL Greg May - U.S. Army Corps of Engineers	√	√	
Mary Ann Poole - Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission	√	√	
Fred Rapach - Palm Beach County Water Utilities Dept	√	√	
Terry Rice - Miccosukee Tribe of Indians of Florida	-	-	Brenda Chalifour
Rick Smith - Office of the Governor of Florida	√	√	
Ron Smola - U.S. Dept. of Agriculture	√	√	
Steve Somerville - Broward County Department of Natural Resource Protection	-	-	Patti Webster
Craig Tepper, Seminole Tribe of Florida	√	√	
Bonnie Kranzer, Special Advisor	√	√	
Rock Salt, Special Advisor	√	√	

Strategy Implementation

Rock Salt reviewed the draft Implementation Coordination document (Enclosure 6) that tries to organize the projects identified in the Strategy (Strategic Plan). The Task Force needs to report on the progress of the Strategy every two years. The Working Group agendas will be organized to focus on those items that were highlighted as objectives in the Strategy over the next year and a half. Follow-up: Working Group members were asked to provide comments to further refine this document.

CERP Update

Dennis Duke noted the Project Management Team (PMT) meeting was held prior to this meeting with participation from the Corps and the local project sponsors. All PMT meetings are open to the general public. The PMT will go over the status of the projects as well as any issues that may arise throughout the Implementation process. PMT meetings will allow stakeholders and interested individuals to participate in

the process. Project Managers from the Corps and the local sponsors are the “point of contacts” when issues need to be raised. He noted that the design effort would continue even without legislation. The design agreement for the entire lifespan of the project was signed on May 12, 2000 with the SFWMD for \$712 million and covers the entire lifespan of the project. The Program Management Plan (MPMP) is not intended to be a technical document but a management document defining the roles and responsibilities between the Corps and the local sponsors. It will provide the tasks to be accomplished as well as the schedule and budget for project implementation. The Design Agreement executed with the SFWMD covers the first twelve projects including the Lake Okeechobee ASR Pilot Project, Hillsboro Site 1; L-31 Seepage Management Pilot and Lake Belt Pilot. Stu Appelbaum added that each one of the projects would provide one of the four benefits. Billy Causey questioned how to better educate the layperson, which will in turn build support for the Corps. Dennis Duke stated the new web site was developed with that purpose in mind. Follow-up: Dennis Duke to provide a copy of the power point presentation.

Water Quality

Dennis Duke stated the Corps is gathering base data and putting together the initial plans. Hoping authorization comes through enabling the Corps to move forward. Richard Harvey stated CERP is the best opportunity to complement the State’s efforts.

ASR, PMP

Peter Kwaitkowski provided an update on the status of the ASR Project Management Plan (Enclosure 7). The Lake Okeechobee, Hillsboro and Caloosahatchee pilot projects will address technical and regulatory uncertainty. Lake Okeechobee and Hillsboro were authorized in WRDA 99 and the Caloosahatchee will hopefully be authorized in WRDA 2000. Project Management Plans (PMPs) are required for each of the components. PMP required for each CERP project and establishes framework to achieve goals and objectives. The seven issues identified by the ASR Issue Team will be addressed. He reviewed the schedule for the Project Management Plan (PMP), which is scheduled for approval by the Executive Director of the SFWMD in December 2000. Once the PMP is approved it will go to the Corps of Engineers’ Project Review Board for their approval as well. Richard Harvey stated that progress is being made on the critical issue of the quality of the water being used for these test wells as well as other ASR projects. Aaron Higer announced USGS has completed its sampling of the source water and the report will be available this month.

Kissimmee Video

Paul Whalen introduced the video of the Kissimmee Restoration Project, which is in its first phase of backfilling the C-38 canal with 12 million cubic yards of dirt as well as the removal of one of the structures. Currently moving ahead of schedule due to the dry weather conditions. Paul Whalen presented Rock Salt with a piece of the rock from the actual demolition for his instrumental role in this project.

Florida Keys Water Quality Improvement Act

Billy Causey stated this initiative in the Keys was introduced by Congressman Peter Deutsch to get \$213 million for Keys wastewater projects. It has passed the House with only 6 dissenting votes and was languishing in the Senate. Supporters for the Act put together a field trip for both House and Senate staffers the Bill is back alive and has been attached to another bill and is currently in Conference.

Comprehensive Exotic Plants Assessment

Bob Doren presented the draft Assessment (Enclosure 8a), draft Strategy (Enclosure 8b), draft Executive Summaries (Enclosures 8c and 8d) and an errata sheet (Enclosure 8e) replacing page 59 in the Assessment document. The Assessment document lists the most invasive plants, the status and distribution management. The Strategy document provides strategies, goals and actions to fix the problem. This report ties into the broad Strategic Plan as well as the work being done by the National Invasive Species Council. Many Working Group members commented that they were impressed with the quality of the report. Action: Working Group agreed to forward the document to the Task Force.

Billy Causey informed the group of the success he had with removing two out of three batfish from Molasses Key with the help of the New England Aquarium and a tropical fish company. The two batfish are on display at the New England Aquarium.

Science Coordination Team Report

John Ogden provided a status update on four out of the 5 SCT tasks:

1. GEER Conference brochure (Enclosure 9) now has a fifth component that has been added for Information Systems. The total system model will be critiqued during the conference with the goal of presenting a revised improved model before the closing session. 280 abstracts have been accepted to date.
2. The CROGEE will be meeting on October 19 – 20, 2000 in Florida. An ASR workshop is scheduled for the 19th and the CERP performance measures with a focus on the science behind the performance measures will be discussed on the 20th. CROGEE's December meeting will be concurrent with the GEER Conference and members will be encouraged to attend. The CROGEE will issue their ASR report on February 1, 2001. The April 23 – 26, 2001 meeting will be concurrent with Florida Bay Science Conference and CROGEE will encourage its members to attend these meetings as well. The CROGEE workplan (Enclosure 10) was provided, the Task Force approved items 1 and 2 and items 3 – 5 were approved at the mini Working Group meeting. It is hoped to present this once again at the next Task Force meeting.
3. The SCT is in the process of reviewing the science for the CERP. The Recover Team will issue two documents, the recommended draft system wide monitoring program and research needs document, both of which will be presented to the SCT for review.
4. Aaron Higer putting together a panel of experts to address the sheetflow and connectivity questions at the GEER Conference.

Public Comment

Brenda Chalifour (United Property Owners and Friends of the 8.5 SMA) stated that the modified water delivery project is critical to Everglades restoration and not completing it puts the restoration effort at risk. She reminded everyone that COL May will sign a Record of Decision (ROD) and based on that decision mod. Waters will either move forward or it won't. Encouraged everyone to work together in moving this project forward. She provided the August 10, 2000 Miami Herald article (Enclosure 11) entitled Corps "Drafts Compromise".

April Gromnicki (Audubon of Florida) spoke on behalf of CERP Implementation, which is now a full year behind schedule. She urged the Working Group to assist in accelerating the PIR process. She invited everyone to attend the Everglades Coalition Conference scheduled for January 4 – 7, 2001.

Mike Richardson (First National Bank of Homestead) noted the primary concern of the agricultural community in south Dade is flood control. He stated that of the 109 performance measures only one was on flood control and it is projected to measure water levels in six locations out of 16,000 square miles. He stressed the importance for all 3 goals to be measured so that the performance measures are not out of balance.

Meeting Adjourned at 5:40 PM.

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September 22, 2000
West Palm Beach, FL*

Billy Causey welcomed everyone at 8:40 AM. June meeting minutes were approved.

Executive Director's Report

WRDA Update – Senator Lott assured everyone the Senate will take up the bill, questions remain as to what will happen once it reaches the House. Workplan (Enclosure 12) reviewed, public outreach conference will not take place this year as a result of the lessons learned workshop. Action/Issues Tracking Chart (Enclosure 13) presented. Carole Goodyear presented draft #3 of the Initial Status Survey of Non Indigenous animals (Enclosure 14 a- e). Carole Goodyear announced she would be retiring the following Friday and wanted to hand this document over. The Working Group agreed to forward this to the Managers of the SCT for recommendation on next steps.

Dispute Resolution – Task Force has given the go ahead, the contract with Florida Conflict Resolution Consortium has been completed and work will begin. Biennial Report proposal (Enclosure 15) presented. A preliminary team meeting will be held on October 5, 2000. The Working Group had no objection to moving forward. Draft 2001 calendar (Enclosure 16) presented and will be scheduled for approval at the next meeting.

Modified Water Deliveries Update – Dennis Duke reported the comment period has closed and COL May is considering the documents. ISOP continuing until IOP is in place. A NEPA document and plan scheduled for release in late June was postponed and the Corps is waiting for CEQ direction. Don't anticipate the IOP being put in place prior to the 2001 breeding season. Brenda Chalifour stated the FWS is asking for structures to be closed stating it is critical habitat for sub population A, when there is no evidence this population even exists. The Tribe has a problem with not getting the data that has been requested. Steve Forsythe replied that FWS has responded to all the letters received from the Tribe. Steve Forsythe noted there is a sub population A, and estimated of the numbers were sent out to everyone. The comment period has closed and a final report on the status of the Sparrow is due out by the end of September/October. No critical habitat designation has been made as of yet. Neal McAliley stated this matter is currently in litigation and the Miccosukee Tribe has been provided with extensive documents on the ISOP/IOP. He added that the ISOP has not increased water levels in area 3A, modelling by the SFWMD indicate it has dried out the area sooner than it would have and this is a year with too little water.

Updates and Discussion

Litigation Update - Neal McAliley provided an update on the Miccosukee Tribe v. NPS over the Big Cypress National Preserve. Three companies have operated the airboat tours east of Everglades City for many years when this was still private property owned by the Colliers. In 1996, the property was obtained by the federal government as part of the Florida – Arizona land exchange. The park Service made a decision that no additional environmental analysis was needed and the airboat tours could continue. The Miccosukee Tribe sued and the Court agreed with the Tribe that additional NEPA was needed and enjoined them from operating. The Tribe has also asked to have the right to operate the tours themselves.

Open Space Bond Resolution – Patti Webster reported Broward County which has been perceived as part of the problem by encroaching 7 miles further into the Everglades has taken a giant step forward by allowing the voters to vote on a referendum that would allow the County to acquire the most environmentally sensitive lands consistent with Broward County's goal. She presented a draft resolution (Enclosure 17 a) for WG support as well as a newsletter (Enclosure 17 b). Fred Rapach suggested changing the third whereas so that it will be consistent with the language in the Strategy document. Brenda Chalifour said she would like to hear what, if any, opposition there was as well as public comment. Craig Tepper suggested striking the word "bond referendum". The Working Group passed a motion to support the Broward County land acquisition program.

Brownfield's Conference Report – Terry Manning reported on the Brownfield's Conference (Enclosure 18), she noted that whether or not the conference was a success would be known over time and the work of the conference is ongoing. Brownfields are no longer an urban issue and the number in rural areas is increasing. Starting to identify these sites due to better education/information. South Florida has been designated as a brownfields showcase community and partnerships have been formed to work on this issue. Rock Salt reminded the Working Group that the subgoals and objectives have not yet been developed for Goal 3.

Sustainable Agriculture – Ron Smola announced the next Team meeting scheduled for October 19, 2000 (Enclosure 18), with a follow-up presentation to be made at the October Working Group meeting. Rick Smith stated the Governor's Commission on Growth recommendations will be presented by Feb 2001 and suggested wrapping in their recommendations into this document. Rock Salt stated that whatever the Working Group says on growth would be tied in with the work of the Governor's Commission.

Governor's Commission – Rick Smith stated the next meeting scheduled for November.

Lessons Learned Follow-up

Public Outreach

Rock Salt stated a structured session would be scheduled for a future Working Group meeting to discuss the public outreach role. Public Outreach Proposal (Enclosure 19) suggests having a two-hour facilitated discussion at the October Working Group meeting. The Conference would be delayed until the Working Group discussion at the October meeting. Fred Rapach said that before the Working Group can do public outreach it needs to know what it's role is. Rick Smith reminded the Working Group that this was discussed at River Ranch and asked if the Working Group is trying to improve public perception or trying to help out communities. Every group has people that do media relations but we don't have our own for this group. Ron Smola agreed with Rick and hoped to bring the Museum of Discovery collaboration to the next meeting.

Regional Assessment Update – Rock Salt presented the Proposal (Enclosure 20) to pull together three workshops. Three PCTs Kissimmee, SW Florida and Keys PCT will be conducting a workshop to decide where their value lies in coordinating the effort. If these workshops are a success then we can consider conducting similar workshops in other areas.

Billy Causey stated that the Biscayne Bay Partnership is considering using the PCT format. Julio Fanjul explained that there is a need to for someone to oversee all of Biscayne Bay. The committee was supported the making it either an Issue Team or PCT. Rock Salt urged the Working Group to state whether they are uncomfortable. The Committee will be seeking approval to establish a Biscayne Bay Issue Team.

Issue Paper Format – Fred Rapach explained the need to formalize the procedure and format for issues coming before the Working Group. A sample position paper (Enclosure 21) was provided. The Working Group may only be able to deal with those issues within the Working Group's purview. Rick Smith agreed group will need to do everything it can to resolve issues including keeping principals informed of what is going on. Rock Salt noted that Ernie has suggested having a brief summary of key items following the meetings to be used at agency staff meetings.

Preparation for Task Force Meeting

Next meeting scheduled in Miami. Meeting will focus on implementing the Strategic Plan and the focus of the Task Force over the next several years. Fred Rapach suggested bringing the CERP and water quality issues before the Task Force. Rock Salt stated the Department of Interior sent Strategy document to Congress and they noted projects and numbers weren't identical to the Total Cost Report and a briefing needs to be provided to the committees to explain why they are different. The Task Force will also discuss the possibility of having a non federal co-chair on the Task Force. Patti Webster offered to provide a 5 – 7 minute power presentation on the Broward County land acquisition program.

Public Comment

None

Working Group Requests/Follow-up Actions

1. WG agreed without objection to forward the Comprehensive Exotic Plants Assessment to the Task Force.
2. WG agreed to forward the Survey of Non Indigenous Animals to the managers of the SCT for further recommendation/direction to be provided to the WG at its November WG meeting.
3. Fred Rapach requested the WG engage in a detailed discussion at a future WG meeting on its role.
4. WG had no objection with moving forward with the Biennial Report proposal and with the preliminary team meeting being scheduled for October 5, 2000.
5. ISOP/IOP briefing will be scheduled at the November WG meeting.
6. WG passed a resolution supporting Broward County's land acquisition program.
7. Update on current water supply situation will be scheduled at the Nov WG meeting (including current activities of the SFWMD).
8. WG requested an update on the Museum of Discovery and Science at the October meeting.
9. Broward County to make a power point presentation on land acquisition at the October WG meeting.
10. CROGEE Workplan will be forwarded to the Task Force at its October 18 meeting.
11. Sustainable Agriculture briefing to be scheduled at October WG meeting.
12. FWS will provide a panther presentation at a future WG meeting.
13. WG agreed to have a facilitated discussion on its public engagement role at the October meeting.

Open Discussion

Steve Forsythe reviewed the activities of MERIT(Enclosure 22) which is focused to develop an Implementation Plan prioritizing the recovery and restoration activities. The team formed three sub teams to focus on species and community issues. Next MERIT meeting scheduled for November 14 – 15, 2000 at the Environmental Learning Center in Vero Beach. The work of the subteams will be shared with MERIT to ensure issues are compatible with the sub goals. He offered to provide a panther presentation at a future meeting.

Frank Finch addressed the Working Group on water supply contingency planning. The SFWMD began intense planning operations in June and developed an extensive plan with the user community to plan for the worst. The water shortage throughout the region during the wet season has produced the driest May in over 100 years. Starting the Execution Phase out of the Planning Phase and a Water Supply Task Force within the District is being headed by Joe Taylor. First goal is to minimize and or delay any effects with water shortage, assure sharing of impact and give users advance notice of the conditions and any potential restrictions. The Board has asked for aggressive voluntary conservation throughout Miami Dade, Broward, Palm Beach counties as well as the Florida Keys.

East Everglades Land acquisition status update (Enclosure 23) dated 9/21/00 was presented without discussion.

Meeting adjourned at 12:20PM.

Enclosures:

1. Agenda
2. Draft July meeting minutes
3. GAO – Water Quality
4. Michael Davis Testimony
5. David Struhs Testimony
6. Implementation Coordination
7. ASR Slide Presentation
8. Comprehensive Exotic Species

- a) Assessment
 - b) Strategy
 - c) Executive Summary of the Assessment
 - d) Executive Summary of the Strategy
 - e) Errata sheet
- 9. GEER Conference Brochure
- 10. CROGEE Workplan
- 11. Miami Herald article
- 12. Workplan
- 13. Action/Issues Tracking Chart
- 14. Status of Non Indigenous Animals
 - a) Executive Summary
 - b) Survey
 - c) Overview of agency activities
 - d) Appendices
 - e) Bibliography
- 15. Biennial Report proposal
- 16. Draft 2001 Calendar
- 17.
 - a) Draft WG Resolution supporting the land acquisition program of the Broward County Safe Parks and Land Acquisition Bond Referendum
 - b) Broward County Newsletter
- 18. Brownfield's Report
- 19. Public Outreach Proposal
- 20. Regional Assessments Proposal
- 21. Sample Issue Paper Format
- 22. Multi Species/Ecosystem Recovery Implementation Team (MERIT)
- 23. East Everglades Land Acquisition (Status 9/1/00)